

**PLAN ADOPTION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
TEXAS STATE SENATE BILL 1
REGION B**

7.1 Introduction

This section describes the plan approval process for the Region B Water Plan and the efforts made to encourage public participation in the planning process.

The Regional Water Planning Group - Area B (RWPG-B) agreed that public outreach and education was of paramount importance if a regional water plan was to be developed that accurately represented the regional area. To this end, a public education and outreach strategy was prepared with the goal to insure that all water users and the public were informed of each meeting and the progress of the plan's development, given an opportunity to present and discuss their concerns and participate in the planning process.

7.2 Regional Water Planning Group

As required by Senate B 1 regional water planning groups were formed to guide the planning process. These groups were comprised of representatives of specific interests:

- General public
- Counties
- Municipalities
- Industrial
- Agricultural
- Environmental
- Small businesses
- Electric generating utilities
- River authorities
- Water districts
- Water utilities

Table 7-1 below lists the 17 members of the Region B Water Planning Group, the interests they represent, their organizations, and their counties.

Table 7-1

Regional Water Planning Group - Area B			
Name	Organization	Interest	County
Jimmy Banks	Wichita County WID #2	Water District	Wichita
Chris Bissett	West Texas Utilities	Electric Utility	Wilbarger
J. K. (Rooter) Brite		Environmental	Montague/All
Mayor Kelly Couch	City of Vernon	Municipal	Wilbarger
Ronald J. Glenn	Red River Authority of Texas	River Authority	All
Paul Hawkins		Public	Wilbarger
Dr. Norman Horner	Midwestern State University	Environmental	Wichita/All
Dale Hughes	W.T. Waggoner Estate	Agriculture	Wilbarger
Bobbie Kidd	Greenbelt Water District	Water District	Foard/Hardeman
Mayor Robert Kincaid	City of Crowell	Municipal	Foard
Lawrence Harmel	Baylor Water Supply Corp.	Water Utility	Baylor
Judge Kenneth Liggett	Clay County	County	Clay
Judge Kenneth McNabb	Hardeman County	County	Hardeman
Dean Myers	Bowie Industries, Inc.	Small Business	Montague
Wilson Sealing	Scaling Ranch	Agriculture	Clay
Fred Stephens	Stephens Engineering	Industry	Wichita
Kay Yeager	City of Wichita Falls	Municipal	Wichita

The RWPG-B Planning Board unanimously pledged to support the interest of all of the region as the primary objective in meeting the needs of the region as a whole. Accordingly the scope of the public education and participation strategy was designed as an outreach to identify and address the needs of all water use entities through:

- Planning Group Meetings and Hearings
- Presentations at Civic Groups and Media Communications
- Survey of Water Use Entities

- Drought Planning Workshops
- Internet Web Site
- Enhanced Water Conservation Planning
- Implementation of the Water Plan

7.3 Planning Group Meetings

The RWPG-B held 21 open public meetings from March 3, 1998 through August 23, 2000 with personal invitations going to each category of interest groups and water use entities within the region including a current agenda for each meeting and encouraging attendance and participation in the process. The RWPG Board participated actively as a group during each meeting, relying upon information provided by its consultant group and appeared to be well informed of all matters concerning the regional planning area.

Each meeting was well attended with an average of 35 guests present and participation was informal, interactive and very productive. A total of 814 persons attended the public meetings and appeared to be satisfied by the representation of their interest by the RWPG Board. Average attendance was maintained at 96% for all meetings held. All recorded votes on issues brought before the RWPG Board was with a unanimous vote of the members present.

Representatives from the Texas Water Development Board, the Texas Department of Agriculture, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department were always in attendance and other agencies were periodically represented and offered presentations. Some of these were agencies such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Texas Department of Transportation; State and Federal Legislators representing the local districts within the regional planning area. All meetings were posted in accordance with the Texas Open Meeting's Law, Article 6252-17, Section 3a, VATCS and 31 TAC, Section 357.12(a)(5).

During each meeting, a presentation of materials, discoveries and relevant issues were provided for discussion and deliberation prior to receiving a vote on any specific measures, action or strategies to be taken on the part of the RWPG-B. Members of the public were given an

opportunity to participate in discussions of individual agenda items as well as to provide public comments prior to the close of each meeting. Minutes were prepared of all meetings and filed with the secretary and the Texas Water Development Board.

7.4 Presentations to Civic Groups and Media Communications

The RWGP-B members and/or members of the consultant group presented overviews of the regional water plan development and specific issues that arose during the process to several public events that hosted persons from a diverse cross-section of society throughout the regional planning areas in north Texas. These events included the following:

- Two Regional Water Resource Conferences - Wichita Falls, Texas with 50-60 persons attending.
- Red River Basin Advisory Committee meetings of the Texas Clean Rivers Program - Two in Amarillo and two in Wichita Falls, Texas with about 35-42 persons attending each meeting.
- Periodical public presentations concerning the general planning process, water quantity and quality issues, improved conservation practices and water rights issues were given to several civic organizations including: two Lions Club meetings, two Rotary Club meetings, one Red River Environmental Science Club meeting, two League of Women Voters conferences, one Texas Farm Bureau meeting, and three area city council meetings in Vernon, Holliday and Wichita Falls.

The RWPG-B Board members promoted numerous media coverage events of issues pending before the board in an effort to encourage public involvement and heighten awareness of concerns vital to the regional planning area. Several newspaper articles have been published and television coverage of meetings and topics have been placed before the general public with a good response and support for the direction the RWPG Board elected to pursue.

The RWPG-B newsletter was mailed to over 250 persons on four separate occasions throughout the planning area and provided to local newspapers and television stations in an effort to keep the region informed of current activities.

The Times and Record News (TRN) was invited to each meeting and attended most which produced good summary coverage of agenda items being considered together with actions taken by the RWPG Board. Accordingly, the TRN utilized a public forum to seek questions concerning area water resources with responses provided from reliable sources in laymen terms to increase public understanding of water resource issues.

7.5 Surveys of Water Use Entities

The RWPG authorized its management agency to conduct a survey of all water use entities within the region to ascertain current and long-term water resource needs relevant to the individual entity. The survey questionnaire was designed to gather pertinent information about the individual entity's population, water source and use characteristics, determine if the entity had a current conservation and drought contingency plan. Sixty-five questionnaires were mailed and 41 returned. The questionnaire revealed that over 85% of the entities surveyed did not have a conservation or drought management plan.

A follow-up telephone survey was conducted to complete missing information from the returned questionnaires and determine if the entity would be willing to participate in a formal drought contingency plan workshop sponsored by the RWPG and conducted by the TWDB and the TNRCC. In light of the rules and regulations, most entities agreed to participate and received a qualified drought management plan suitable for filing with the State.

Personal visits to entities within the region were conducted for clarification of the SB-1 requirements and to provide explanation of how the new law will impact and benefit their public water supply operations. In all cases, support for the SB-1 and the Regional Water Plan was solicited with a very high degree of success. With the exception of eight public entities, the majority of all the water use entities within the region (85%), including water supply corporations, provided monetary support for the program administration and public endorsement of the proposed methods being employed by the RWPG Board and the consultant group to produce a Regional Water Plan for Area B.

7.6 Drought Planning Workshops

The RWPG organized and conducted four drought planning workshops throughout the region with the assistance of the TWDB, TNRCC and the consultant group engaged to prepare the regional water plan. The workshops were designed to interact with the individual entity and collect sufficient information to construct a drought management plan according to the TNRCC suggested guidelines. Workshops were held in:

Attendees

- Vernon 10
- Seymour 14
- Henrietta 21
- Wichita Falls 14

The RWPG's consultant group participated and evaluated the information obtained from the entities then compiled draft documents for the entity's review. The RWPG's management agency revised the draft received from the entities and prepared the final version for their adoption. A total of 40 drought management plans and five conservation plans were provided to the participating entities within Region B. This represents 95% of the entities within the region who did not have an acceptable drought management plan.

The drought plans were judged an overwhelming success by the recipients due to the extended drought conditions being experienced throughout the region and enabled the entities to begin utilizing the plans alternate resource management strategies based on the emergency trigger conditions being encountered at the time.

7.7 Internet Web Page

Due to the public interest being generated from the initial meetings and subsequent drought planning workshops, an Internet Web Page was designed and hosted by the RWPG's management agency for disseminating information about the water resources within the region and to publish notices of meetings, hearings and issues being considered and addressed by the RWPG Planning Board.

The web pages are maintained by the RWPG's management agency and updated at least monthly, or more often as needed, to publicize current information of interest and solicit input from the viewers. The web site is located at www.rra.dst.tx.us/rwpg and is available on a 24-hour basis.

The web site contains numerous links to other pages of common interest for the viewer and begins with a front page that includes a publications library, regional data inventories, names and addresses of the Regional Planning Board, public events calendar, enabling legislation (SB-1), maps of the region and a place for written comments to the RWPG-B.

7.8 Public Hearings and Other Public Meetings

The RWPG-B conducted three public hearings to receive comments on the initial organization of the planning group and to review and comment on the Initially Prepared (draft) Water Plan for Region B. Comments, both oral and written, were transcribed from each hearing and filed with the secretary and the TWDB. The RWPG also maintains a complete record of all hearings and public meetings at the office of its management agency, the Red River Authority of Texas. The hearings were held on March 30, 1998, June 9, 1998, and August 23, 2000, respectfully. The Initially Prepared Water Plan for Region B was adopted on August 23, 2000 by a unanimous vote of the RWPG-B Board.

Additionally, the RWPG Board appointed a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of three board members, representatives of the consultant group, the public and invited guests of various expertise for review of technical materials and matters to which the RWPG Board would ultimately have to decide upon. The TAC also qualified the consultant group and recommended selection to the RWPG Board. During the Regional Water Plan development process, the TAC met and evaluated alternatives for recommendations to the RWPG Board and discussed proposed water management strategies with the affected water use entities prior to consideration for adoption by the RWPG Board.

The TAC was instrumental in reducing confusion of sensitive matters and neutralizing controversial issues before being considered by the RWPG Board. The process was very

successful and was a useful means of keeping the RWPG Board well informed concerning forthcoming matters that could develop into potentially volatile situations.

7.9 Enhanced Water Conservation Planning

During the course of developing the regional water plan and working closely with the water use entities, one apparent need surfaced as being common among the majority of the public sector - water conservation practices in the home. The RWPG's goal is to reduce the per capita water use over the region by 30% over the next five years and measure the results with the next revision to the Regional Water Plan for Area B.

Several traditional conservation programs were evaluated to determine the most effective means of encouraging the general public to implement and practice water conservation in the home and business sectors. Most programs evaluated were cost prohibitive and did not have a productive track record in areas needed for the Region B Planning Area.

Because of the media attention and extended drought conditions being experienced within the regional planning area, a small group of concerned citizens not directly associated with the RWPG challenged members of the Board to participate in a non-profit organization to solicit the necessary funds from the private sector to promote and encourage an effective water conservation program within the regional planning area. The organization has currently filed its Articles of Incorporation with the Secretary of State as a 501 (c)(3) Corporation and selected a number of directors from the region to serve on the governing board. The newly formed corporation, Wichita Water Conservation, Inc. has adopted the mission to educate the people of SB-1 Regional Planning Area B on the need for short term and long term water conservation.

7.10 Regional Water Plan Implementation Issues

Implementation issues identified for the *Initially Prepared Region B Water Plan* include: 1) financial issues associated with paying for the proposed capital improvements, 2) identification of the governing authorities for general regional strategies such as brush control, recharge enhancement and weather modification, 3) public acceptance of selected strategies, and 4) public participation in water conservation measures that were assumed in this plan.

Financial Issues

It is assumed that the entities for which strategies were developed will utilize existing financial resources, incur debt through bond sales and/or receive state-supported financial assistance. Most likely the funding of identified strategies will increase the cost of water to the customers. The economic feasibility to implement the strategies will depend on the cost increases the customer base can assume. Some strategies may not be able to be implemented without state assistance.

Governing Authorities

In Region B there is an identified governing authority for each of the preferred strategies discussed in Section 5.8. However, for general strategies, such as brush control or weather modification, no governing authority has been identified. As part of the feasibility of these strategies for Region B, a governing authority will need to be identified to implement such strategies.

Public Acceptance

The public has expressed concerns regarding using wastewater effluent and/or water from Lake Kemp for municipal supplies. Both of these strategies are proposed to meet demands for the City of Wichita Falls. While the final treated water supply from either strategy will meet or exceed the City's current water quality, the perception persists that the water would be of lesser quality. To gain public acceptance of wastewater reuse and Lake Kemp strategies for municipal use, additional public educational programs may be needed.

Public Participation

The projected demands developed for this plan include a significant level of conservation to be implemented over the planning period. These assumed demand reductions were applied to municipal, manufacturing and agricultural water uses. Some of the demand reductions will occur simply through improvements in technology. However, a moderate level of public participation is required to fully realize the expected conservation. If the conservation is less than expected, then there may be additional shortages that were not identified in this plan.